

ISTORY OF *and* SUGGESTIONS IN  
*The Making of*  
 BISCUITS, QUICK BREADS  
*and* CAKE

For Use in *Classroom — Extension Work — Women's Clubs*

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MARY RANDOLPH

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 did not arrive at its  
 Present *Maturity* but by  
 slow degrees, various  
 experiments, and a long  
 period of time. In all  
 CULINARY *Art* skill as  
 well as SUITABLE MATE-  
 RIALS is a *most* Essential  
 Element. ❧ ❧ ❧

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*The Making of*  
BISCUITS, QUICK BREADS, *and* CAKE

THE making of snowy biscuits, tasty waffles, and delicious cakes is an art that registers high in the appreciation of mankind, for it is the expression of the culinary skill which is, after all, the reflection of the civilization and the culture of a people.

Culinary art, as it stands to-day, is the result of continued effort by careful cooks and pastry makers of the past three centuries. Emerging from feudal days, from the heavy walls and battlements of the people of that period, there came, as the amenities of life advanced, an expression of hospitality in terms of better foods and careful service. Not a gluttonous age, as in the days of Rome at its worst,

*When Lucullus, they say,  
Forty cooks had each day,*

but an age that was developing a nicety in table service as well as a finer and more delicate rendering of the art of cookery.

Bread has been and perhaps always will be the outstanding evidence of our civilization; so bread making for many years was the foundation for cake making, and cake and tea-biscuit making the topping evidence of the gentle art of cookery.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, cake was merely bread dough, yeast raised, enriched with eggs, sugar, and fruit added. When flavor was used it was either of fruit, wine, or brandy, or some sort of flavoring compound. The cake was a mixture of bread dough containing

*Sugar and spice  
And everything nice.*

It had considerable bulk, for it usually was made by the peck, and when done frequently weighed from three to five pounds; it required



many hours in preparation, for there were no easy methods in cake making in those days. Frequently three hours were spent in blending the sugar, which came in chunks, with the butter in the cold windy kitchens of the early days.

To beat the great mass of eggs required in the production of the cake was no small task, for two dozen eggs were none too many to lighten the batter to a consistency suitable for producing cake. So cake making was an event of some importance in those days, even in the days of an abundance of domestic help. Frequently a day was spent by several people in its preparation, and many hours were necessary for the baking.

Midway in the seventeenth century, Gervase Markham, in his book of "Country Contentments," put down these definite requirements for a good cook:

*"First she must be cleanly, both in body and garments; she must have a quick eye, a curious nose, a perfect taste, and a ready ear: She must not be butter-fingered, sweet-toothed, nor faint-hearted; for the first will let everything fall, the second eats too much, and the last loses time with fussiness."*

A popular cake for the banquet and feasts of the colorful period of Elizabeth and her household was

## A GOOD SEED CAKE

*"Herein are the procedures and ingredients: take five pounds of fine flour, well dried, and four pounds of single-refined sugar, beaten and sifted; mix the sugar and flour together and sift through a hair sieve; then wash four pounds of butter in eight spoonfuls of rose or orange flour water; you must work the butter with your hand till it is like cream; beat twenty eggs, half the whites, and put to them six spoonfuls of sack; then put in your flour a little at a time, keeping stirring with your hand all the time; you must not begin mixing it till the oven is almost hot; you must let it lie a little while before you put your cake into the hoop; when you are ready to put it into the oven, put into it eight ounces of candied orange peel sliced, and as much citron, and a pound and a half of caraway comfits; mix all well*

*together and put into the hoop, which must be prepared at bottom, and buttered, the oven must be quick; it will take two or three hours' baking. You may ice it if you please."*

*"Housewife's Companion," 1790.*

Here eggs doubtless served the very definite purpose of a leavening agent to lighten the batter and so produce the desired light and flavory texture required in cake.

As commerce extended over the seas to the fast-growing colonies of east and west, wealth increased, and with it came finer living expressed in choice food and greater and finer type of table settings and furnishings; so, too, cake making became more than a sweetening of dough or an enriching of bread batters. It was discovered that, eggs added, the nicer and lighter was the cake, the tastier and more delicious the product. Eggs were cheap then, so in the favored cake of that period it was common to use from twenty to thirty-six eggs; for the egg served as a leavener of the cake. For this much seems true, the use of eggs in a cake is requisite to lightness and fine texture as well as to flavor.

Standards of living in the eighteenth century were considerably advanced over those of the preceding years. Travel was more easily accomplished, for going was better, so with the increased wealth of the people came added visiting among groups of friends, relations, and acquaintances. Meals began to be something more than a mere effort to satisfy hunger, and served as a social and frequently a political function; so, choice qualities of food were developed and the making of light small breads or biscuits and rich flavory cakes—large, small, and layer—became one of the favored tokens of good living. Here begins the use of a pleasant expression of table life in that period, for to say "They eat well" indicated in no small degree the family's high social standards.

In many of the old cookery books we constantly meet the phrases "Skill in cookery," "Skill in choosing flour," "Skill in blending flavors," "Skill in mixing ingredients," and skill there must be in these same items to-day if successful cookery is to be secured. The first cakes then were merely sweetened bread—dough, eggs, spice, and perhaps fruit and some flavor added. Some expert cake makers



found that a more generous use of eggs gave a lighter and whiter cake; omitting the yolks added whiteness and perhaps lightness.

The first of the leavenings introduced to supplant yeast was pearl-ash, which makes its appearance in receipts early in the nineteenth century. In "New American Cookery," by an "American lady," published in New York in 1805, appears Honey Cake, in which two teaspoons of pearl-ash are used.

Mistress Mary Randolph, in 1828, wrote "The Virginia Housewife" with the slogan "Method is the soul of Management," and published it in 1828. In her preface she writes:

*"Management is an art that may be acquired by every woman of good sense and tolerable memory. If, perchance, she has been bred in a family where domestic business is the work of chance, she will have many difficulties to encounter; but a determined resolution to obtain this valuable knowledge will enable her to surmount all obstacles. She must begin the day with an early breakfast, requiring each person to be in readiness to take their seats when the muffins, buckwheat cakes, etc., are placed on the table. This looks social and comfortable."*

And social and comfortable it reads. Mistress Randolph uses pearl-ash—three teaspoons dissolved in a cup of water—in her "Plebeian Ginger Bread."

Miss Leslie, of Philadelphia, for so her signature always reads, published her book of Seventy-five Receipts in 1827 in Boston. Pearl-ash is a requisite for many of her cakes. In Miss Leslie's Dover Cake she dissolves her half-teaspoon of pearl-ash required in a little vinegar, and says, "The pearl-ash will give it a dark color." In her book, some thirty years later, bicarbonate of soda appears as a leavening agent, which she sometimes calls "sub-carbonate of soda."

In the sixties cream of tartar and soda was the popular leavening for cakes and tea biscuits; waffles and receipts for muffins appear in constantly increasing numbers, giving evidence of their popularity and tastiness.

Unquestionably baking-powder was produced as the result of a demand for a convenient leavening powder that could be used with sweet milk or water and that would produce a nice, fine-grained,



sweet-tasting, and tender white cake or white biscuit, for the soda-made product required sour milk or buttermilk, and, unless great care was exercised, not only lacked the proper leavening but was too yellow in appearance and brackish in flavor, "that soda taste," as it was described. Baking-powder, proportioned carefully by skilled chemists, entirely does away with these disagreeable results. So entered baking-powder, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, a product which has added greatly to the palatability of our foods, and because of this has revolutionized our cookery.

Baking-powder brought in its box much good eating, such as delicious biscuit for tea or breakfast, for luncheon or dinner; the light, fluffy dumpling, to add to the savory veal or lamb stew; the hot waffle, rich and tasty with or without fried chicken or veal cutlets; the colorful, tasteful, and appetizing pancake; the poppy pop-over; the attractive and tasty muffins and gems for early or late breakfast, and finally a whole range of choice cakes, cookies, and pastries,—all these in the can of baking-powder—a very definite reason for its preference and popularity.

Many words have been written, many speeches made, concerning baking-powder and its action; the real thing to be sought is a strong, steady powder, not only quick in action but steadily on the job during the baking process. What makes the wheels go round is as legitimate a question to age and experience as it is to youth. What atom-unit promotes the rise in the batter when baking-powder enters is deserving of investigation. Here is a most interesting hypothesis presented after careful examination by an experienced observer.

"While eggs do not themselves aërate the dough, yet, owing to the peculiar glairy consistency of their whites, they materially assist in retaining the air introduced in mixing the dough, and as the white of egg coagulates at baking temperature, the little 'balloons' of expanded air are retained and the dough is thus lightened." During the past fifty years, baking-powder has been developed to produce leavening or aëration by the evolution of a harmless gas in the dough, and useful purposes in reducing the number of eggs required in cake making and giving a finer texture and flavor. But eggs are still essential to lightness, fine texture, and flavor. In some baking-powders white of egg in powdered form is included, thus combining



the more efficient leavening power of baking-powder with the peculiar quality of eggs to retain and more evenly distribute the leavening gas.

An interesting subject surely and certainly of value, but to the average man or woman "the proof of the pudding is in the eating," for the test of the baking-powder is finally in the light, flavory, tender, and tasty product. The baking-powder that produces good biscuits and waffles, cake or muffins that eat well and are tasty, light, and tender justifies its use in no uncertain manner.

## SKILL IN FLOUR

**S**KILL in the choice and handling of flour is a matter not only of information but of experience, for flour even at best is a constantly varying substance, never twice identical, always subject to the variations of the wheat from which it is made.

Flour being the principal ingredient in making bread, biscuits, cakes, or pies, it is important that it must be selected with care and used with skill as well as eyed with all the available experience. The only safe way, not only for cookery safety but for health preservation, is to avoid mixtures of uncertain origin or unknown ingredients sold under the name of self-rising flour, for in truth there is no such thing. When it is self-rising, it isn't flour; it is a compound of many things under a fanciful name, so the safest way is to avoid it for these reasons:

The proportions of flour and baking-powder, or any other leavening agent to be used in cookery, are very different, depending on the consistency of the batter, the way it is to be cooked—whether boiled, baked, or done in hot fats; each requires a different amount. Again, the best flour is none too good for family use. It is not possible to control the kind or quality of flour put into ready mixed packages; flour might be of very low grade, quite deficient in vital elements, and yet be flour, so on that score it is not wise to use unknown flour; then, too, the leavening agent frequently becomes inert through natural causes, such as heat, moisture or humidity, and so it is recharged, dosed again and perhaps again, with the so-called baking-powder, which naturally cumulates in the flour and changes a benign product to a questionable element. To repeat, there must be care in the use of baking-powder to insure good food, for all receipts



cannot be written to one standard of leavening. Dumplings require one quantity, pancakes another, and baking-powder biscuits insist on another. So also with cakes. Loaf cakes have one requirement of baking-powder, layer cakes another, and cookies yet another; so there is no safety in baking unless the baking-powder be freshly inserted in the required quantity into the flour, sifted in and sifted again, and the other ingredients added in their due place.

There is a real need for the manufacture and sale of baking-powder, because the housewife cannot accurately proportion the ingredients. There is certainly no need for the manufacture of self-rising flour, for she can mix and proportion baking-powder with the flour more efficiently for her varied needs than can any manufacturer.

## SKILL IN MIXING

**T**HE manipulation of butter and sugar is always important, and there is opportunity here for fine skill. One of the choice secrets of good cake makers is to wash the salt out of the butter and wash into the butter the flavoring desired; when rose water is used add just a touch of vinegar, it creates a charming and delicious blend.

First of all see that the oven is on the way to readiness, so that when the mixture is ready the oven will be at just the right temperature to do its part in properly baking the product; so start the heat for the oven.

Have ready your measures, your flour at hand (soft winter wheat flour makes a more tender product), butter ready, and sugar convenient—an earthen mixing bowl is best. Count out the eggs required and have an extra glass for breaking them into, lest a bad one present itself and so contaminate the mass. Have baking-powder present and see that the can has sufficient quantity for the desired work.

Marshal your products in the order of their use, the dry ingredients thoroughly sifted, mixed, and blended ready to be put into the liquid, or vice versa, as the product requires.

In beating eggs, beat to lightness, and, in fine baking, whites and yolks separately. A drop of lemon-juice hastens the desired stiffness in egg whites, and gives hint of flavor that is delightful.

The oven temperature is very important. A quick oven for biscuits, muffins, pop-overs, and layer cakes; a hot oven for sponge-cakes; a slow oven with steady heat for the serious task of baking a fruit cake or rich loaf cake.

## MEAT PIES

**I**N these days of excessive costs, meat pies will do much to lessen the butcher bills and give sufficient and satisfying food to any family. Make the coffin or shell of the meat pie of baking-powder crust, line the dish bottom and sides, and set in the oven and bake. Have your meat stewed or cooked, and sufficient water or gravy to give enough liquid; put in coffin or shell, put fresh crust over, and bake.

The directions for preparing can be found in any cookery book, but the ingenuity of the housewife will need no suggestions for using it as an envelope for choice and dainty bits of meat and vegetables, too little to serve alone, but, combined, sufficient for the family dinner or lunch, a savory pie full of appetizing food.

Among the pies most popular which can be made for individual use or large size for the family are

*Mutton Pies*

*Veal Pies*

*Fish Pies*

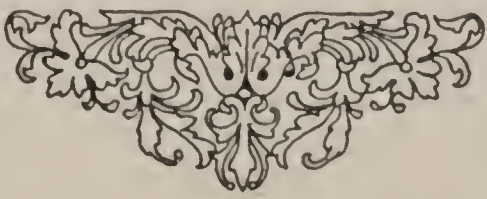
*Lamb Pies*

*Chicken Pies*

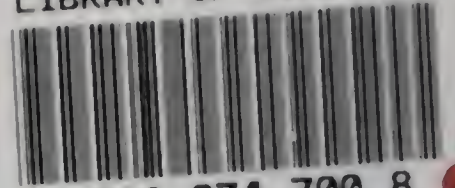
*Oyster Pies*

Not overlooking *Sam Weller's* Veal and Ham Pie, so temptingly discussed in "Pickwick Papers," and so palatably offered in the admired housekeeping of yesterday. The key to success in the preparation of meat pies is in the tenderness of the meat and the rich tasty flavor of the gravy, or cullis, as it was then called. The vegetables were diced or sliced and previously cooked, the whole marshaled into the crusty, light and flaky coffin, or shell, which was previously baked, then topped with the remaining crust, and the whole finished to a rich golden brown.



FILLINGS	THE BATTER	VARIATIONS
<p>FIG FILLING</p> <p>1/2 lb. chopped figs 1/3 cup sugar 1/3 cup boiling wa- ter 1 tablespoon lemon juice</p> <p>—</p> <p>COCOANUT FILLING</p> <p>Whites 2 eggs beaten till stiff, add powdered sugar to spread, sprinkle with shredded co- coanut, spread on top and between layers.</p> <p>—</p> <p>JELLY FILLING</p> <p>Spread jelly—cur- rant or other fruit —between layers.</p> <p>—</p> <p>COCOA FILLING</p> <p>6 tablespoons co- coa 1 cup sugar 1/2 teaspoon salt 1/2 cup milk 2 tablespoons but- ter 1/2 teaspoon vanilla</p> <p>—</p> <p>CREAM FILLING</p> <p>7/8 cup sugar 1/3 cup flour 1/8 teaspoon salt 1/2 cup scalded milk Yolks 2 eggs 1 teaspoon vanilla</p>	<p>THE MASTER CAKE</p> <p>1 scant cup butter 1 1/2 cups sugar 3 eggs, beaten sep- arately 1 teaspoon lemon or vanilla 1 saltspoon mace 1/2 cup milk 3 cups pastry flour 3 level teaspoonsful baking-powder 1/2 teaspoonful salt</p> <hr/> <p><i>Method</i></p> <p>Separate eggs, cream butter and sugar to- gether, add beaten yolks, add milk and flavoring extract, add flour and white of eggs, thoroughly beaten stiff alternately. Sift salt with flour and baking- powder.</p> <p><i>Moderate, rising oven.</i></p> <hr/> <p>VOLUME OR PRODUCT</p> <p>2 medium loaves or 1 loaf cake, 1 layer or dozen individual cakes.</p> <div data-bbox="470 2068 956 2267">  </div>	<p>RAISIN CAKE</p> <p>1 cup raisins, well floured, added to bat- ter. —</p> <p>SPICE CAKE</p> <p>Cold coffee instead of milk, mixed spices to taste. —</p> <p>CURRENT CAKE</p> <p>1 cup currants, well floured, added to bat- ter. —</p> <p>LEOPARD CAKE</p> <p>(Yellow or Brown)</p> <p>For brown mixture put original batter in cup, drop enough melted chocolate to color brown. —</p> <p>HICKORY NUT CAKE</p> <p>1 cup hickory nut meats, chopped and floured. —</p> <p>INDIVIDUAL CAKES OR LUNCHEON CAKES</p> <p>Use small tins, regular batter, iced, or any above mixtures.</p> <p>—</p> <p>DOMINO CAKES</p> <p>Use regular batter, bake in thin layer, cut in domino size, use white icing, use choco- late for domino mark.</p>

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